

an audiovisual reproduction unit storing in computer memory a plurality of audio and video information items, the audiovisual reproduction unit communicating with the cable network for distributing audio and video information items via a dedicated channel of the plurality of channels; and

a plurality of television sets, each coupled with the cable network for receiving the audio and video information items and including:

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a remote unit interacting with a respective television set, the remote unit effecting selection of at least one audio and video information item from the plurality of information items stored in the audiovisual reproduction unit for transmission over the dedicated channel,

an identifier that identifies one of the remote unit or the respective television set corresponding to selected audio and video information units, and

a billing device receiving information from the identifier, the billing device effecting billing for selections made based on the identifier information.

REMARKS

In view of the amendments and remarks, favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application is respectfully requested. By this Amendments, claim 20 has been amended to more accurately describe the invention. Thus, claims 11-22 are pending for further examination.

Claims 11 and 14-22 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as allegedly being obvious over Hickey, in view of Takahashi and Hendricks. Claim 11 has been amended

herein in order to more clearly distinguish the cited references. For at least the following reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are not rendered obvious by the cited references. Thus, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The Examiner asserts that Hickey teaches a system for distributing and selecting audio and video information on a CATV network comprising an audiovisual reproduction unit communicating with a CATV network. Applicant respectfully submits that the Office Action appears to either mischaracterize the present invention or the system taught by Hickey. In fact, it is Applicant's understanding that Hickey is a system which provides the playback of several types of audiovisual media by controlling a plurality of playback units (see abstract, lines 3 to 8). Based on Applicant's understanding, the system of Hickey could be connected to interactive TV services like TV cable to allow a user to make a selection of data provided by these interactive TV services. When the interactive TV services is TV cable, the system of Hickey works as a TV set equipped with a TV cable network interface. Thus, based on this understanding, the system of Hickey is only a playback device, which eventually works as a TV cable receiver.

In contrast, the present invention is a system for distributing and selecting audio and video information. Hickey appears to allow a user to select audio or video information from different media, because the system of Hickey stores a plurality of audiovisual media and controls a plurality of playback units. However, Hickey does not appear to disclose or suggest that the system could distribute any audio or video information and a dedicated channel on a coaxial cable network. The system of Hickey

does not provide any device or means for distributing audio or video information on a cable network. Further, in Hickey the audio or video information items are stored locally on the audio-visual control computer of Hickey. In contrast, in the present invention, the audio and video information items are stored remotely in computer memory of the audiovisual reproduction unit and are played on TV sets.

In the case where Hickey's system is connected to a TV cable network, the only information transmitted by the system on the TV cable network is a request for selecting available data of an interactive TV service. Hickey does not indicate that the available data includes audio and video information items stored on computer memory. Moreover, there is no disclosure that the data transmitted by the system of Hickey corresponds to audio and video information. As already explained, when the system of Hickey is connected to a cable network, it works as a TV set.

The Examiner asserts that the system of Hickey necessarily provides a plurality of TV sets. However, this assertion is not supported by Hickey. If the examiner considers that the audio-visual control computer of Hickey could be connected to a plurality of TV sets to allow the plurality of TV sets to receive audio and video information sent by the system of Hickey, we already explained that Hickey does not disclose that the audio-visual control computer could transmit audio and video information on the cable network. Further, we do not read in Hickey that a plurality of TV sets and the audio-visual control computer were connected to the same cable network. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner either withdraw this rejection or specifically identify this asserted disclosure.

At page 3, lines 1 to 9 of the Official Action, the Examiner considers that a plurality of the audio-visual control computers of Hickey could be connected on network cable. However, as explained above, the system of Hickey works as a conventional TV set. The audiovisual reproduction unit of the invention could be compared to an interactive TV service disclosed at col. 8 lines 37 to 56. However, neither this portion or any other portion of Hickey discloses the following feature of claim 1: "an audiovisual reproduction unit storing in computer memory a plurality of audio and video information items, the audiovisual reproduction unit communicating with the cable network via a dedicated channel of the plurality of channels". In fact, an interactive TV service does not use a unique dedicated channel, but a plurality of channels. Further, an interactive TV service provides broadcast programs or services, which could be selectively chosen by a user by selecting the correct cable network channel. The access to a service could also be authorized only after user's registration. In addition, as already explained, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Hickey that the audio or video information items are stored remotely in computer memory of the "interactive TV services" and are played on TV sets.

In the present invention, an audio and video information item is transmitted over the dedicated channel only if a user selects it by the remote unit. This feature also means that the other TV sets connected to the dedicated channel receives the audio and video information items selected by a user of other TV sets. This last feature is opposite to the purpose and operation of an interactive TV service wherein a user accesses a program or a service only if he is authorized. However, a user could not provide access for all users to a program or service.

In summary, It appears that the Examiner considers that the interactive TV services disclosed in Hickey could be compared with the audiovisual reproduction unit of the claimed invention. However, as explained above, this comparison is erroneous, because the audiovisual reproduction unit is obviously not a broadcast service system but a reply/request system. Further, the audiovisual reproduction unit allows a user to transmit an audio and video information item that could be seen on other TV sets connected to the dedicated channel. Concerning the storage of audio and video information on computer memory, the Examiner asserts that the audiovisual computer of Hickey is the audiovisual reproduction unit defined in the claims. However, in the Official Action, the examiner considers that the interactive TV services disclosed in Hickey could be compared with the audiovisual reproduction unit of the claimed invention and that the audiovisual computer of Hickey corresponds to TV sets. Thus, according to the Examiner reasoning, the audiovisual computer of Hickey is at once, a TV set and the interactive TV services with which the TV set is connected. This position is not tenable and reconsideration thereof is respectfully requested. The audiovisual computer of Hickey is either a TV set or the audiovisual reproduction unit of the invention, but not both.

In the first case, wherein the interactive TV service is compared to the audiovisual reproduction unit of the present invention, it is explained above that the interactive TV services of Hickey do not anticipate the audiovisual reproduction unit of the invention. In the second case, wherein the audiovisual computer of Hickey is compared to the audiovisual reproduction unit of the present invention, the audiovisual computer of

Hickey does not distribute audio and visual information on a dedicated cable network channel. Thus, Hickey does not support the rejection stated by the Examiner.

Moreover, Takahashi only discloses digital storage of audio and visual information. Thus, even combined with Takahashi, the system of Hickey does not teach or suggest the particular combination of elements defined in the claims, and particularly not the feature related to the storage of audio and video information on computer memory.

Hendricks only discloses a new interactive TV service including a billing system. The audiovisual reproduction unit claimed in the present invention is not a new interactive TV service, but is a system for distributing, on a dedicated channel, audio and video information items which have been remotely selected. In fact, Hendricks does not disclose that a user allows the transmission of selected audio and video information items on the cable network and that this transmission could be seen on other TV set connected to the dedicated channel. Thus, even combined with Takahashi and Hendricks, the system of Hickey does not render the invention obvious.

In view of the above, Applicant respectfully submits that amended claim 11 is patentable over the prior art of record. Moreover, claims 12 to 19 are also allowable at least by the virtue of their dependency on claim 11.

Moreover, concerning the rejection of claims 12 and 13, Thompson discloses an interactive media system using a telecomputing method enabling a user to send directional, triggering, and other input to a computer with telephone keypad signaling and receiving visual feedback and displays relating to that input. However, Thompson does

not teach or suggest using this method in a system for distributing and selecting audio and video information.

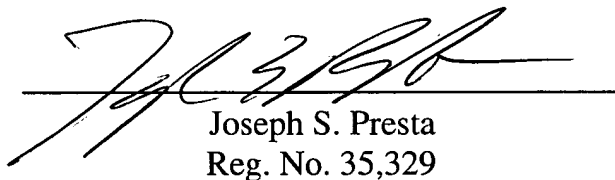
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that all of the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Thus, withdrawal of the rejections and passage of the case to issuance at an early date are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner have any questions, or deem that any further issues need to be addressed prior to allowance, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at the phone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.

By:


Joseph S. Presta
Reg. No. 35,329

JSP:mg
1100 North Glebe Road, 8th Floor
Arlington, VA 22201-4714
Telephone: (703) 816-4000
Facsimile: (703) 816-4100